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# JOURNAL

OF THE

## New York Entomological Society.

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EDITED BY HARRISON G. DYAR.

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Publishes articles relating to any class of the subkingdom Arthropoda, subject to the acceptance of the Publication Committee. Original communications in this field are solicited.

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### EDITORIAL.

The genus, as primarily and logically defined, is a conception of its author, possessing a certain set of characters, arbitrarily selected. Any species possessing all of these characters, no matter what others, belongs to the genus, and any species not possessing all of these characters does not belong to it. This is the original idea of a genus. If, therefore, an author defines a series of genera to his own satisfaction, and a second author divides the same set of species on other characters, or on the same ones differently combined, none of the genera used by the second author are the same as those of the first. Unfortunately for the plan, a genus carries a name and in the case just supposed none of the generic names proposed by the first author could properly be used by the second author, but he must propose an entirely new set. Now successive authors seldom have the same generic conceptions, while fixity of names is a prime requisite. To bring it about as far as possible, the rule of priority has been invented and it has been decided that no names can be dropped, but every name validly proposed must be forever carried, either as a valid genus or a synonym of some other. Each generic name must depend upon a typical species and any group thereafter formed that contains this typical species must carry that generic name. Thus only can old names be saved and applied to new generic groupings.

The logical result is to completely transform the original idea of a genus. It is no longer a conception of its author, but is dependent upon the characters actually possessed by its type species. From a

nomenclatorial view, it is immaterial whether an author describes his genus or not, or whether he describes it wrongly, so long as the type species is ascertained. This once ascertained, the genus is fixed, although the characters of the type species may even contradict those given by the author. What he states can have no weight except as to the mention of the type. It follows that any genus originally containing no species mentioned by name, or only undescribed ones, is invalid and to be ignored, no matter how fully described. It is a *nomen nudum* and that name can be subsequently employed in any sense. It also follows that the question of misidentification does not arise, the species mentioned by the author as his type, or the one determined by rule to be his type, is thereby the type, even though (if the type be an old species) he may obviously describe another.

The idea of Professor Williston, quoted in our last editorial, who says: "I consider a genus as something more than a specimen," is seen to be distinctly archaic and impracticable, while the complaint of Professor John B. Smith, recently published in *Science* that his generic names have been used in another sense than he intended by Sir G. F. Hampson is without justice and due to a failure on the part of Professor Smith to logically view the necessary result of the type idea.

The rule for selecting types of genera when these are not specified by the author becomes of the first importance, and its full discussion at the present time is abundantly justified.

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### BOOK NOTICE.

*A Natural History of the British Lepidoptera*, a text book for students and collectors. By J. W. TUTT, F. E. S. Volume V. London: Berlin: 1906.

We have the pleasure to notice another of Mr. Tutt's remarkably full and detailed volumes. This one contains two chapters of general matter entitled respectively "Hybridisation in Lepidoptera" and "Mongrelisation in Lepidoptera," followed by a minute account of the British Pterophorids. *Agdistis* is included, two superfamilies (!) being recognized, the Agdistides and Alucitides. The former contains the family Agdistidæ, the latter the families Platyptilidæ and Alucitidæ, and these are again divided into subfamilies, tribes and genera. We have previously expressed our opinion that Mr. Tutt gives his